



**Volunteer Community Co-ordinators
for the Office for Senior Citizens**

**The New Zealand
Volunteer Community
Co-ordinators (VCC) Programme**

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This is the second edition of the VCC Programme published 2008 by the Office for Senior Citizens, Ministry of Social Development.
The first edition was published in 2002.

ISBN 978-0-478-29302-9

ISBN 978-0-478-29336-4 (Online)

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The logo is a flame representing the enduring contribution of older people

History of the VCC Programme

The United Nations designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. During the International Year, New Zealand joined other countries around the world in honouring older people and acknowledging their contribution to society.

The Office for Senior Citizens, Ministry of Social Development, was responsible for promoting the International Year to government agencies and the wider New Zealand community.

Support was sought from key older people's organisations and a network of volunteers was set up to work with the Office on this project.

Twenty-nine volunteers, nominated by community organisations from various parts of the country, joined the network and it became known as the Volunteer Community Co-ordinators (VCC) Programme.

The VCCs played a vital role in the success of the International Year of Older Persons. In many cases, the networks they established in their communities provided a focus that brought community groups together for the first time.

There was strong community support for the VCC network and the Minister for Senior Citizens made funding available for the programme to continue.

Over the years the VCC programme has grown and developed and the partnership between the VCCs and the Office for Senior Citizens has strengthened. The programme is highly regarded for promoting positive ageing and for the quality of its advice.

To reflect their role, older volunteers who work in the programme are known as Volunteer Community Co-ordinators (VCCs) for the Office for Senior Citizens.

The VCC Programme

The VCC Programme is a network of approximately 50 volunteers who have been nominated by a local incorporated society or charitable trust with an interest in older people, to work with the Office for Senior Citizens.

The purpose of the VCC programme is to promote positive ageing and to inform central and local government about matters affecting older people.

VCCs bring personal knowledge of their communities enabling them to make a significant contribution to policy development.

The role of a VCC is not a full-time commitment. It involves working with the Office for Senior Citizens to carry out projects on behalf of the Minister for Senior Citizens. The programme provides a link between the Minister for Senior Citizens and older people throughout New Zealand. This assists the Minister to advocate for older people at Cabinet level and in other government policy forums. An important aspect of the programme is that it provides the opportunity for older people to influence policy.

The VCCs are a diverse group and are located in different parts of the country. They have access to a wide range of local networks, including people from different cultures and backgrounds, from rural and urban areas, community organisations and local government.

How people view older age varies in different cultures. Information gathered by the VCCs is shaped by community views. For example, Maori VCCs and VCCs from Pacific groups often arrange a hui or fono to gather and distribute information.

Projects

VCC projects are often generated by the Minister for Senior Citizens following consultations with older people around the country.

Projects cover different topics that generally relate to a current policy matter. The way projects are carried out will depend on the information required.

VCCs work directly with the Office for Senior Citizens on projects and represent their community (not their nominating organisation). The Office for Senior Citizens is often asked by other parts of the Ministry of Social Development, and sometimes by other government agencies, to arrange for small groups of VCCs to take part in focus groups in Wellington or in other central locations.

VCCs may be invited to take part in the early stages of a much larger project, before details have been released by the Minister or the Ministry. In these circumstances VCCs will be advised whether the topic is confidential and the level of detail that can be discussed with their nominating organisations.

VCCs may be invited from time to time to arrange a focus group or to conduct a survey in their local community. The VCC programme is flexible so that local projects are tailored for each community.

VCCs work directly with the Office for Senior Citizens on projects and do not represent their nominating organisation.

Office for Senior Citizens

A cornerstone of the VCC programme is building effective relationships between each VCC, the nominating organisation that supports them and the Office for Senior Citizens.

The Office for Senior Citizens co-ordinates, funds and promotes the VCC programme.

The programme operates from the Office for Senior Citizens and the Office is responsible for managing the programme and:

- providing ongoing support and advice to VCCs and their nominating organisations
- developing and maintaining the VCC network to include cultural, geographic coverage and gender balance
- managing the appointment of new VCCs
- providing VCCs with information about projects
- providing resources and guidelines for local focus groups or surveys
- arranging telephone conferences, meetings and the annual VCC forum
- providing VCCs with information about relevant publications of interest to their communities
- assisting nominating organisations to manage any conflict or risk involving their VCC
- paying a small annual grant to each nominating organisation to cover expenses associated with the VCC programme
- paying for travel and accommodation when arranging for VCCs to take part in projects held in a central location.

The Office for Senior Citizens is available to provide guidance and assistance. The Office will help a VCC and nominating organisation resolve any matters relating to the work of the VCC, or the programme in their area, that cannot be worked out locally.

Positive Ageing Ambassadors

There is a small group of older people, called Positive Ageing Ambassadors (PAAs), who have worked with staff in the Office for Senior Citizens or with the Ministry over a long period of time. The title Positive Ageing Ambassador is given in recognition of their support for the work of the Office for Senior Citizens. Positive Ageing Ambassadors have demonstrated exemplary personal qualities and leadership in positive ageing in their communities.

Successful relationships are built when there is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

Nominating Organisations

A nominating organisation is an incorporated society or charitable trust with an interest in older people. These organisations are invited by the Office for Senior Citizens to put forward nominations for a VCC, and to support the VCC in their role.

Nominating organisations keep close communication links with the Office for Senior Citizens to discuss matters relating to the programme and, from time to time, take part in regional meetings and telephone conferences. The Office for Senior Citizens will ensure that a nominating organisation has information about the programme and can be contacted for further information if required.

It is important that nominating organisations understand the VCC programme. The role of a nominating organisation includes:

- identifying suitable people to nominate as VCCs
- lodging a copy of its Certificate of Incorporation with the Office for Senior Citizens
- providing local support when the VCC is invited by the Office for Senior Citizens to arrange a local project
- holding funds provided by the Office for Senior Citizens to cover VCC expenses.

Nominating organisations are important because they provide the link between the VCC, the Office for Senior Citizens and the community.

Nominating organisations should discuss with the VCC the level and kind of assistance it can provide to support the VCC .

All expenses and administration costs associated with local VCC projects are paid from the grant provided by the Office for Senior Citizens. Neither the VCC nor the nominating organisation should be out-of-pocket.

If a nominating organisation decides to withdraw from the programme it is important for the Office for Senior Citizens to be notified.

The type and level of support provided by the nominating organisation should be discussed with the VCC and can vary from district to district.

Nominations, Appointments and Resignations

The Office for Senior Citizens is responsible for calling for nominations for the VCC programme, for appointing VCCs, and when appropriate, seeking the resignation of a VCC. On rare occasions, the Office for Senior Citizens may use its authority to remove a VCC.

Nominations

In addition to the knowledge and skills of nominees, and their ability to represent the views of their local community, the geographic coverage, cultural and gender balance of the VCC programme is a primary consideration when the Office for Senior Citizens appoints a VCC.

Nominating organisations are asked to:

- identify people with the skills to take on the VCC role
- discuss the VCC programme and roles with prospective VCCs
- select two or three people as nominees and complete the nomination forms, including a personal profile of each nominee
- send the nomination forms, along with the profiles, to the Office for Senior Citizens.

Appointments

A VCC is appointed for a term of three years. In some circumstances the Office for Senior Citizens may invite the VCC to continue in the role for a further year.

The Office for Senior Citizens will:

- manage the selection process
- advise the nominating organisations of the outcome
- contact any successful nominee(s) and provide them with information about the VCC programme and their role.

Resignations

There may be cases where it is appropriate for a VCC to resign. This will generally be where a VCC can no longer perform their role due to ill health, a change of circumstances or a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest can occur where a VCC takes on another role with a different or conflicting agenda. In this situation, the Office for Senior Citizens would expect a VCC to resign but it also has the authority to remove that VCC if appropriate.

When a VCC is appointed to a position on a national board, or on a national organisation that represents older people, the VCC should consider resigning from the VCC programme to allow another older person to have the opportunity to have a voice through the VCC programme.

When a VCC resigns from the programme it is the responsibility of both the VCC and the nominating organisation to notify the Office for Senior Citizens. The Office will call for new nominations, generally from older people's interest groups, and will send them nomination forms.

VCC programme guidelines are useful when nominating organisations discuss the programme with nominees.

VCCs

As with any volunteer programme, the most important resource is the volunteers who willingly give their time and expertise.

It is important for VCCs to develop and maintain positive relationships and strategic links with key individuals and organisations in their community such as:

- older people's organisations
- Māori/iwi groups
- Pacific groups
- ethnic groups
- local councils
- community boards
- churches
- service clubs (Rotary, Lions)
- Probus
- libraries
- neighbourhood support groups
- Community Police
- Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Wide networks enable VCCs to gather views from their community.

Other VCC responsibilities include:

- developing and maintaining a good working relationship with their nominating organisation and with the Office for Senior Citizens
- seeking advice and support from the Office for Senior Citizens on matters relating to the VCC programme
- meeting project deadlines
- participating in telephone conferences, workshops and the annual VCC forum
- advising their nominating organisation and the Office for Senior Citizens of their intention to resign from the programme.

As a VCC becomes known in their community they may be contacted about personal cases. It is important that the VCC understands that their role does not involve dealing with specific cases or personal issues. People who ask for assistance should be referred to an appropriate local organisation. VCCs should contact the Office for Senior Citizens for advice if they are unsure about any matters.

The level and detail of reporting between a VCC and their nominating organisation can differ in different areas, and is decided by them.

Communication

Clear and open communication between the Office for Senior Citizens and VCCs is important so that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.

The Office for Senior Citizens keeps in touch with VCCs in a variety of ways including:

- regular newsletters about the programme and current policy matters
- one-to-one phone contact
- email
- telephone conferences
- regional meetings
- an annual forum.

Communicating by email has become very important as it enables the Office to make contact with the VCCs quickly. It is also an efficient way for VCCs to communicate with the Office for Senior Citizens.

VCCs should communicate regularly with their nominating organisations. Each year a representative from the VCC's nominating organisation will be invited to take part in a telephone conference to give them an opportunity to talk about their involvement in the programme.

Local media may be interested in a VCC project but it is not the role of a VCC to communicate with the media on any matter. Media enquiries about the programme should be referred to the Office for Senior Citizens.

The VCCs and nominating organisations should always feel free to discuss their ideas and concerns with the Office for Senior Citizens. Often a phone call can clarify matters quickly.

Clear, open communication ensures everyone understands the programme.

Expenses

Each year the Office for Senior Citizens provides nominating organisations with a small grant to cover expenses incurred by VCCs when undertaking local positive ageing initiatives.

Before the grant can be paid each nominating organisation will be sent two copies of a Letter of Agreement, to be signed by an executive officer of the nominating organisation, and returned to the Office for Senior Citizens. The Office will send one signed copy of the Letter of Agreement back to each nominating organisation for their records and will arrange payment of the grant.

For audit purposes nominating organisations are required to set up a separate accounting stream to manage grants. For example, they could establish a special account code or open a separate bank account to identify the VCC programme income and expenditure. Nominating organisations should establish normal accounting procedures to manage the reimbursement of VCCs' out-of-pocket expenses.

It is important to work within the grant provided as no further funds will be available.

The Office for Senior Citizens will arrange and pay for airfares, accommodation and meals when VCCs take part in projects or meetings organised by the Office.

The VCC and the nominating organisation should not be out-of-pocket when carrying out projects.

Annual Forum

Once a year the VCCs and Positive Ageing Ambassadors (PAAs) are invited to attend a three-day forum in Wellington. The annual forum is an important event where the Minister for Senior Citizens and officials from the Office for Senior Citizens meet the VCCs and PAAs to discuss policy issues. This is also an opportunity for the VCCs and PAAs to discuss and share work undertaken during the year.

The forum is a time when the VCCs and PAAs hear from key speakers about policy matters that affect older people, and it provides opportunities to get to know the other VCCs and to share experiences and ideas.

The Minister for Senior Citizens and the officials who work with the VCCs highly value the work of the VCCs and PAAs, which raises awareness about positive ageing in New Zealand and influences policy development.



OFFICE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

TE TARI KAUMĀTUA

Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

LEADING POSITIVE AGEING – The Office for Senior Citizens

The Office for Senior Citizens is part of the Ministry of Social Development, and provides the Minister for Senior Citizens with advice on issues relating to older people.

The Office promotes and monitors the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy, and advocates for policies that have a positive effect on the lives of older New Zealanders. The Office also develops legislation that protects the rights and interests of older people in New Zealand.

It is important for the Office to maintain a close working relationship with the community and this is done through the Volunteer Community Co-ordinators (VCC) programme. This is a network of older volunteers who carry out projects on behalf of the Minister for Senior Citizens and keep the Office informed about matters affecting older people.

More about the Office for Senior Citizens

Please visit www.osc.govt.nz for more information about the Office for Senior Citizens and the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy annual reports and action plans.